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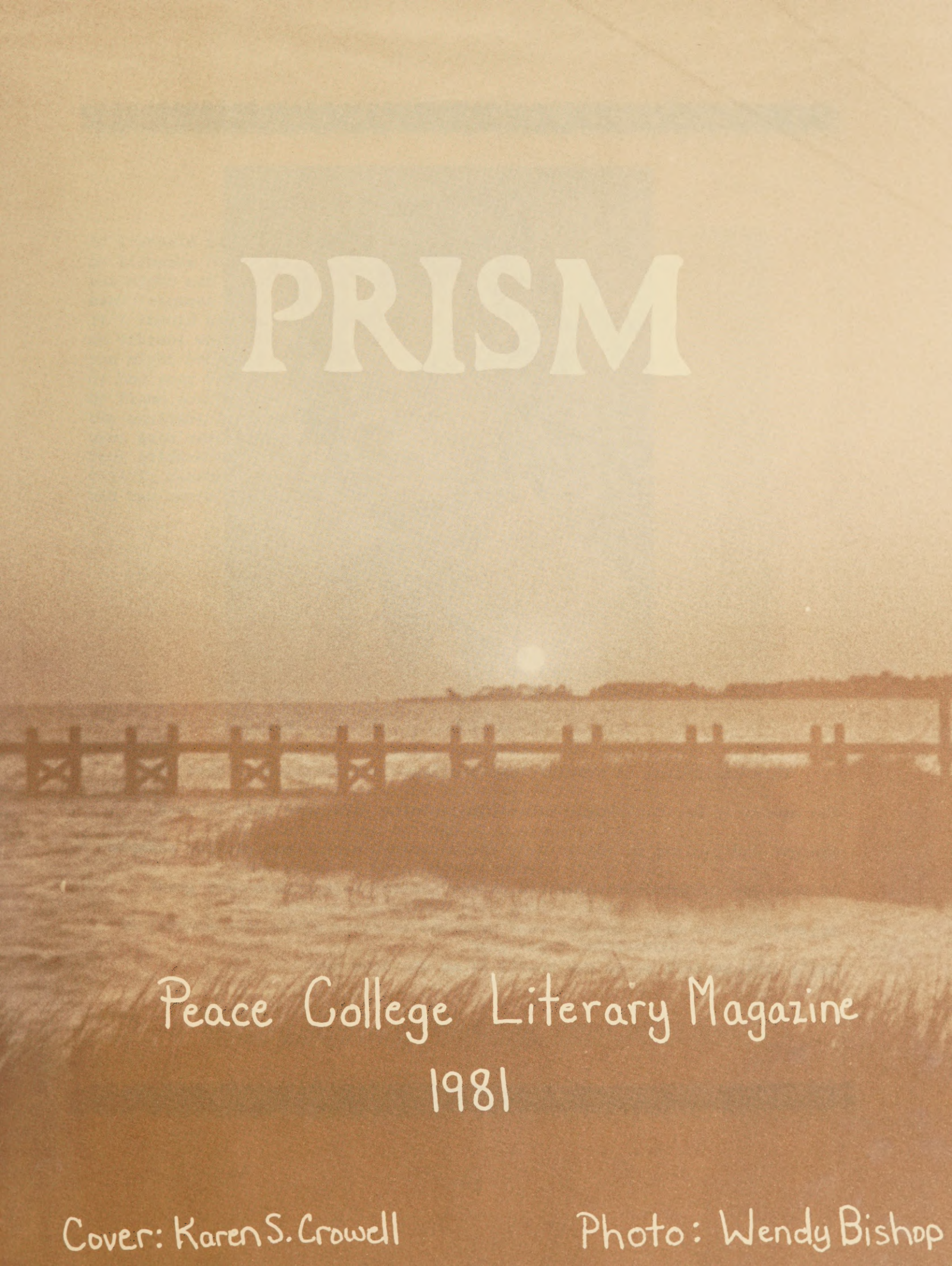
PRISM



Peace College Literary Magazine

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Cover: Karen S. Crowell

Photo: Wendy Bishop

This collection of thoughts and feelings is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Dr. Mary Pogue Schwertman, who inspired the best in both thought and feeling in all of us. She served as a true and abiding example of what God intended His children to be, and the loss of her is a great injustice to us all. May she rest warm and at peace within the sancity of God's love as well as in the hearts of we who love her.

THE GIFT

If I should say no warmth you brought, no fire,
no richness that I asked, no burning gold,
you might not guess how very dear I hold
each fragment of your faith that I acquire.
If I should say you brought no singing lyre,
no vibrant words, no secret to unfold,
you might not guess what truth your silence told
or how your very stillness might inspire.
No flame you brought, but silently you poured
the sunlight in my hands, and watched it spill
upon each seed that waited for the day.
Your silence cut my blindness like a sword
till I, ashamed, knelt on the sunlit hill
and saw where all the world in green fire lay.

Mary Pogue Schwetman

THE CHAPEL

With simple grace the chapel holds its spire
Above our lives that tangle in the dust;
Alone it stands yet steadfast in its trust
To catch some glint of God's eternal fire,
And all our halting mortal dreams inspire
Towards what is holy, beautiful, and just;
A symbol of the soaring upward thrust
Of souls in pure and infinite desire.
Then from that quiet steeple let me learn
To bear my life on high with equal grace;
A prayer that others may in me discern
Some spire of hope, some sunlight in my face,
And in this darkening world, our souls may turn
To find our God within some sunlit place.

Mary Pogue Schwertman

First Prize Art

Debbie Rawls

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First Prize Poetry

PERMITTED FRUIT

You touched me with petal gentleness
And my blood surged sap-like
The blossom before the fruit
Whitely shrouded the green
Inexperience of this, first love.
Still unripe, we roundly waited
Until, in sweet, luscious maturity
We took our first juicy red bite.
Haphazardly scattering the seeds.

Julie Taylor

First Prize Poetry

REMEMBERANCE

Flanneled and footied
I made the nightly ascent
to you, the summit of Mount E-Z
Boy, where
I placed my ear upon your neck
To let your secret low humming
Murmur me to sleep.
Johnny Cash songs:
Because you're mine,
I walk the line.
And though I was alert to the Old
Spicey smell of your nine-o'clock shadow
as its whiskers lifted my hair
(on the high Notes),
Though I felt your
muscles tense gently as you
secured your black-framed glasses,
I feigned absolute unconsciousness
So you'd lift me in
your strong, impermeable arms
and hum me safely, softly to bed.

Your eyes are the color of
jeans after the third wash.
I remember how they filled with tears
at the sight of tears in mine,
How, when they looked into mine,

their summer blueness rained
on my sad, arid spirit
And I grew.

And now, Protector,
Father,
Friend.
White antiseptic men tell me
that those eyes will never open
Again.

And, my God, Daddy, as I rain on you
Why in the hell aren't you crying too?

You belong to me. I need you here.
I cannot live with all this fear
For though I know it can't be true,
I feel I can't be safe without you.

I'm crying now as I cried then
Oh, how I need to feel again.
The circle of your arms at night.
To make this all come out all right.

Now, softly in the midst of all my pain,
In greyness it begins to rain, rain, rain.

Julie Taylor

Second Prize

Poetry

WIDOW'S WALK

Star-burnt holes of the navigation-perfect sky
 openly stare at my bold form on the widow's walk
my patient watch calms not the restless sea
 as it teases and taunts me to forget you
only the waves know where you went, the secretive, steady waves
 only the moon and the traveling Tern know of your adventures
 tonight
and only the sleeping sail-like sky knows why your ship
 does not grace the harbor below
and why you are not here listening to the shore's lullaby by my side
 Still I wait, my weighted heart sinking lower, lower
like an anchor soon to snag the depths
 only to be brought to rest securely on deck
by the hoist of your presence.

Tara L. Humphries

Second Prize Poetry

FIELDMOUSE

Haunched in dried grass
the tawny fieldmouse hoards seeds
as a snake passes near

Tara L. Humphries

Second Prize

Poetry

SPRING

Time's alarm whispers,
waking nature from a dead calm sleep.
Nature unblanket's herself,
turning back sheets of ashen skies
uncovering cotton candy clouds
floating on a sea of blue.
She stretches her tender green limbs
while a breeze tangles with her.
Her fingers tickle the sun, then return
to rub dew from eyes that bloom like pansies.
Nature is a rainbow,
Casting off her colors to life.
Good morning, spring.

Stephanie Phillips

Darlene Flynt

Third Prize Poetry

LOOKING DOWN FROM HIGH-TOP

Mountains keep secrets
and I listen as the trees
share them in the breeze.

Susan Amos

Honorable Mention Poetry

AN APRIL ODE

When joyous song rings in the air
Why do I always fail to sing,
But rather, listen for the bad
Notes of insecurity?
And as a new snow brings with her
A virgin blanket, fresh and white,
Why am I blind to God's pure beauty
And see the cold; the ice; the fright?
Why does the daisy's simple beauty
And likeness to a candle's glow
Bring back the haunting, empty ground
Of April, many years ago?

I watch and stare yet never see
I touch so much but never feel;
I gain the sight of what is not
And lose the sight of what is real.

Am I too scared to permanence
Because I know that it's a farce,
Or do I dwell too much upon
The April filled with empty hearts?

Lori A. Collins

MORNING

Child gathers jonquils
Butterflies flex in the field
Morning opens her eyes

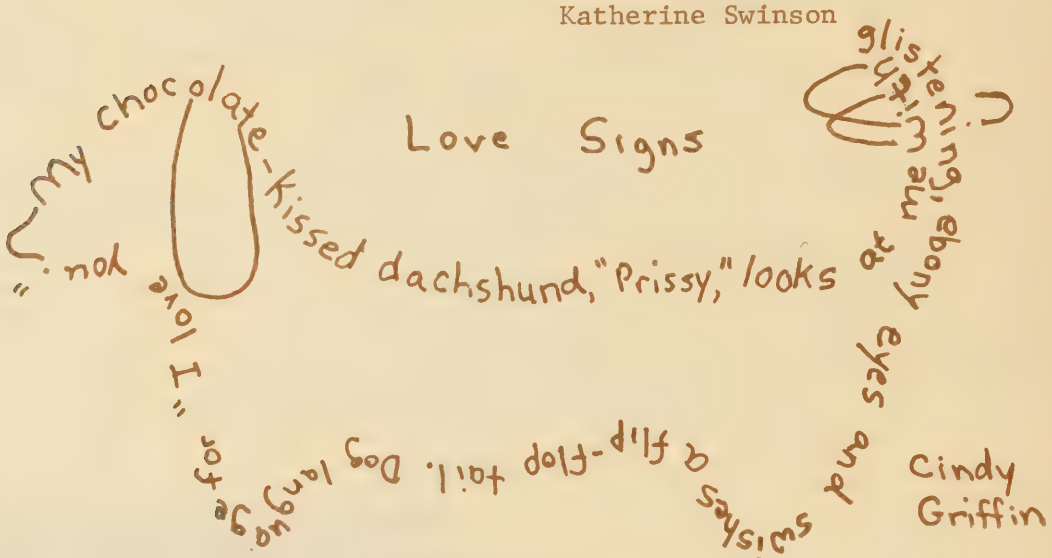
Tara L. Humphries

Wanda Freeman

PERSEPHONE

Old man Winter died today
A graceful, innocent child has taken his place.
Blushing Cardinals sing her praises,
Prettily-painted, angel-winged ladies-in-waiting
Touch her quietly on an awakening Daffodil petal.
Minute mirrors of the morning reflect her magic.
Her daintiness is revealed in the pink Dogwood blossom.
Yes, Earth has given birth to a fervent charmer,
Words of Love from tender winds enfold her.

Katherine Swinson


Love Signs
"I love you."
My chocolate-kissed dachshund, "Prissy," looks at me with glistening, ebony eyes and swishes a flip-flop tail. Dog language of joy.
Cindy Griffin

LOVE FALLS

Flakes of white crystal gather passionately in the yard.
Gently, yet with romantic ecstacy, the snow enshrouds all.
Brisk winds and the snow flurry are the quenchless flames within.

Suddenly . . .
It ceases to glide giddly from the sky.
The distant, pale horizon seems at peace.
The land is molded without flaw by whiteness:
A loving quilt of assurance;
A pure serenity warmed by the light of time.
This light peers from behind the walls of snow clouds
and love is sealed with strength and endurance.

Katherine Swinson

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

In morning's pristine air
The old man stands revealed,
Whose cornerstone
And cool sequestered spires
Are free for all to view.

No blow of hammer built this face;
No craftsman shaped this brow;
No vain inscription marks this place
Chiseled by wind and rain.

Velvet grass decks this rugged face--
With virgin forsts on knobby hills,
Indented with deep valleys and
Broad expansions of limestone crag.
Slender, stately pine and poplar,
Shady maple, elm and ash;
Clustered thickets of snowy mountain laurel,
Rose and purple rhododendron;
Solomon's seal and trailing ferns
Entwine with wild grapevine tendrils.

Tangled, somnolent habitat of lurking rattlers,
Harsh wilderness haunts of fierce wild boar--bear and deer--
Squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, raccoon,
Quail, cardinals, robins, sparrows--
Every shape of beast, bug and fowl--
Find home in this creviced brow.

The lightning's spark, torrential rains,
And thunder's rumbling roar
Behind the rainbow;
The sun's cascade of gold
With wind's unrestrained blasts
Shaped this sleepy, lofty mountain gaint.

Jean Frazier

MORNING SUN

Early one January morning,
standing in the kitchen by the window,
hovering over a plastic bowl,
I gazed at the symmetry of the sun,
reflecting radiantly on a pallet of snow.

The sun's reflection
made a perfect white morning broken.
Without being outside, I knew
the air was thistle sharp
and more fragrant than perfumes of Arabia.

Staring, inquiring why it couldn't always
shine so brilliantly,
Why it couldn't always shine at me just so.
Gradually the sun extended its luminous
rays even more--
Then, thoughts were interrupted by a coarse yell:
"I'll have mine scrambled, please!"

Rhonda Winstead

Honorable Mention

Art

Alison Evans

First Prize Fiction

Georgie-O

He woke with a start to the chatter of the birds outside his window. They must have produced the clattering he had been hearing in his sleep. Rudely awakened on the late April morning, he slammed the window shut and caused the birds to scatter. At least I know it was just a dream he confided to himself. The weather he had been experiencing in his dream was dark and stormy, but today was determined to be a magnificent example of spring sunshine. Outside the bedroom window the birds had taken up their chorus again.

He glanced about the room before moving again, just to make sure that he had no unexpected guests. The room was empty of intruders and he instead admired how cozy and clean the room was. His late wife had told him time and again that he had no taste and would have to hire a maid to keep up with the housework. That had been three years ago, and though his arthritis made it difficult for a fifty-six year old man, he had come to enjoy housekeeping and had kept up with the latest in decorating by continuing his wife's subscriptions of various women's magazines. "George," he said to himself, "Janice must be proud of you."

Satisfied, he stumbled to the bathroom. It was 6:30, a half an hour before he usually rose on Saturdays, but he knew he could sleep no more. Perhaps the warmth of a shower would wash away the images haunting his thoughts.

No sooner was he under the steady stream than the entire dream came alive again for him. It seemed he had been building up to the nightmare for some nights now, but this previous night had been the most severe test. A few nights ago he had seen himself behind the auction block as he usually was on Saturday mornings. Though the setting and activity were typical, there was something frightening about the scene, as if someone was trying to warn him of danger.

The next times the dream was repeated details had been added; first there was the angry-looking man who bid on and won the item George was offering; then the scene had been darkened, as if the lights had been dimmed, or the action was taking place in candle-light. A night later he knew that the price of the item would begin with a two and would have a five in it--odd, he thought, because those had always been his lucky numbers.

Until last night the dream had been the same: the same man was always bidding on the item, and a woman was sitting right behind him. Frantically she jumped up and down, greying her white dress, and out-bidding every offer they made, prefacing the amount with, "Don't let him have it!" The same jack-in-the-box motion continued every night until George woke up. After three nights of two and five

bidding, the woman looked frazzled, but though she was slower, this did not stop her from her determined mission. Suddenly the warehouse seemed empty and he could hear his own bickering, challenging auctioneer's chatter echoing against the walls. Without his notice it had grown darker, but he was not disturbed because the darkness seemed to be natural.

In a sudden flash of light he saw the face of the worn woman, now covered with perspiration. He felt that he should recognize that face but he couldn't remember the person to whom it belonged. In the moment's pause she had looked at him with determined eyes and had stretched out her arms as if to grasp him. He had been taken aback by this obvious insinuation on the woman's part, but could not take his eyes off her face. It now seemed to have a radiance of its own, as if it were glowing. And the soft eyes were trying to tell him something; he could feel the warmth in his brain.

As if commanded to do so by some outside force, he declared the man to be the winner of the bid. Still mezmerized, he followed the woman as she walked to the propped-open door of the warehouse. Momentarily he looked down at the object the man had purchased; across the dusty lid of the box was printed in gold, "The Life of George Ormond Fredricks." Stunned, he looked away, not realizing that he was again staring at the door. The woman was still there. She blew him a kiss and said, "Welcome home, darling." With those words another jolt took him as hard as the first: the woman was Janice. He took a step toward the door and she was gone into the greyness of the haze outside. All he could perceive was a steady chipping sound. Then he woke up.

George got out of the shower as unrefreshed as when he had gotten in. He noted in the mirror that his eyelids were drooping more than usual and the circles and bags under his eyes seemed fuller than usual. He didn't shave, figuring that in his present state he would probably cut more skin than whiskers. The unmade bed was neglected also, as the sight of it brought deep gut pains that made breathing difficult. He went straight into the kitchen after dressing, but by-passed the eggs that he had set out for scrambling in his usual preparations the night before. The coffee-maker had come on as it was supposed to at 6:30 and its usually welcome aroma was invading the air. This also he by-passed, not even turning off the machine. He tried to eat a bowl of cereal but couldn't manage to swallow. Normally he would have washed the bowl immediately, but today he left it sitting on the table. He didn't take the unused bread out of the toaster, nor did he open the curtains and water his deceased wife's plants he had slaved so hard to keep. He decided to go on down to the warehouse; maybe its emptiness would calm him. He almost forgot to stop at the closet to grab a jacket for "just-in-case" but his hand hit something on the telephone stand beside the closet and he was reminded of the jacket. The closet door would not close; looking down he saw that it was held open by something that had fallen from the stand. He picked up the object: a gold-framed picture of Janice.

She had leaned over a bird-bath in a garden well-populated with flowers and trees. It was early spring and the azaleas had been in full bloom. At forty-seven she still had a youthful figure and her hair was still a magnificent sandy-blond. Playfully she had posed for her husband, her teasing showing that she was as much in love

with him then as she had been the first time they had visited these gardens, on their honeymoon.

They had been celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary, but they would not see another. He realized now that the doctors already had told her that she would only have a few more months before the cancer growing in her brain won the bid; still she had insisted that she was happy, happy because her Georgie-O was having fun. Finally she had confessed her condition to him, but only after they were home and had unpacked. By the time the pictures had come she was spending her last nights in the hospital. She had died painlessly, thanks to modern medicine, babbling in her delirium that she had seen the future in the water of the bird-bath.

As if suddenly chilled, George stumbled and rushed out of the house. He could still hear her saying, "That's my Georgie-O."

To his dismay the warehouse was not yet open for the day. Alone in the parking lot, and weary from his poor sleep he soon dozed off sitting in his car. He was awakened from a peaceful slumber by the voice of Sam, a junior auctioneer. "George, we've been calling your house all day! No-one knew where you were, so we started without you."

It was customary for George to start the selling and then leave in the early afternoon. A quick look around the now full parking lot said that the warehouse was also packed. Already he could see the employees taking out purchased merchandise for the new owners.

"What time is it, son?" he asked, wearily resting his head against the back of the seat and peering at the boy with one eye closed due to the bold sunshine.

"Ten-thirty, sir, you've missed two and a half hours, and, man, is it ever heavy in there. These people are haggling over every-thing. We really need you."

Slowly, as if relishing the taste of every single moment, George got out of the now hot car and went into the sweltering warehouse.

A man twenty years his junior was now taking bids on a trunk full of china. Normally the stuff would be sold in a lump, he thought, but today the buyers were calling for each individual piece. As he couldn't break in now he went to the very back of the rows of seats, and finding an empty chair, leaned back against a ceiling support in it. The heat was affecting him more than usual and several times in a matter of minutes he wiped his face with his handkerchief and found it covered with a grimy combination of moisture and dust. He waited wearily for the sale of the chest's contents to come to an end, as he was sure there would be a mid-morning break and he could take over then.

Though the people were bidding like wild-fire, they were only inching the price up with each new offer. He knew that the secret to taking a bid was to jump the price to a point that your opposition will have to think about spending that much money.

Inwardly he chuckled and closed his arms around his chest. He could remember selling two identical Queen Anne chairs, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. Slowly he closed his eyes as he reminisced. In the earlier sale, the bidding had climbed slowly until finally the crowds gave up at four-hundred-fifty dollars. That afternoon the earlier winner had wised up and when the bid

had gotten to a hundred-fifty, she had jumped it up to two-hundred-fifty dollars. Everyone had been astonished, and no-one challenged that price, even though some had bid higher that morning. Yes, Janice sure did learn fast, he thought, as he drifted off to sleep.

He was awakened by the clattering of folding chairs as people began to mill about and wander toward the parking lot. At first he thought it was a break, but the amount of dust in the air from the parking lot told him that it was lunch time. As he marveled at the amount of time he had slept, he realized that there was someone beside him. He turned and found Leo, the same collegue that had been filling in for him when he had come in now waiting at his side.

"How do you feel George? Are you O.K.?" he asked with genuine concern.

"I'm fine," George mumbled in an unusually drab voice.

"Well, Old Man, I think you had best come in from your nights on the town a little earlier so you can get more sleep!"

Unaware of the man's jest he asked, "How's it going?"

"Oh, boy, George, most of our crowd is leaving. There's a thunderstorm on the way and they don't want the merchandise to get wet on the way home, so ..." His pause was so long that he seemed to have forgotten what he wanted to say. Finally he continued, "We're thinking of closing now, except that there are a few items that there is a special demand for, about three pieces, but, well, I live so far away, and I don't like to drive in the rain, but ..."

"Tell you what, Leo, I'll take care of these things, and you go on home to Sylvia. I wouldn't want her to worry about you." George knew that Sylvia was probably asleep and could hardly care less whether he drove in the rain or not; after all, Sylvia was a lazy black Persian cat. But he did care that his friend made it home safely, so he willingly accepted the task. Besides, he thought, he needed to earn his keep.

Leo patted him on the back in his friendly way and pointed out the three items he was to auction off. One was an upright-model vacuum cleaner, the other a large pressed glass vase with a brass base, and the final one, a box, black with dust. Curious about the box, which he felt he had seen before, he asked about the contents.

"It's just a box of rifles, about fifteen years old, not much to 'em 'cept rust." He paused as one of the crew walked past on his way out. "They're nothing big, but Sam, the new boy, found 'em in a barn and thought he had somethin'. It's just a matter of making him feel like he belongs." Leo winked at his companion.

George had done the same for him once, selling some inexpensive silver-plated candy dishes that Leo had thought were solid silver.

"Special demand," he snickered to himself as Leo walked out. That meant that the people were friends of the manager of the auction company, and had requested that item in particular.

He sauntered up to the platform, observing the six people before him. Generally there was no competition for the items, so he's set what he considered to be a respectable price and wouldn't let an item go for below that.

The vacuum cleaner was a late model, probably discountinued, and there was only a remote possibility that it would work. Worthless, he thought.

"Do I have ten dollars for this item?" he said, not bothering to build it up in his typical manner.

"You've got it," said a squat man standing to his right.

He recognized the man as the owner of a second-hand appliance shop. Sometimes he would be called in to salvage what he could after fires, and he had sometimes traded valuable items that he had found in the rubbish for something from the auction company. He was a shady but regular customer, and would pay the manager, some time.

As the man dragged his purchase off behind him, George held the vase up for his audience to view it. Most likely the buyers had already studied it, but by holding it he could judge its weight and from that get some idea of its value. "Pretty good," he mumbled, noting that it was heavy, the side seams weren't too obvious, and that the base was solid brass.

"Can't take less than seventy-five dollars for this beauty. It's worth every penny of it," he announced. The young couple sitting on the front row discussed it quietly. He didn't know their names, but they had bought the Perkins house on Walnut Street and were furnishing it with antiques. Finally they consented and the woman wrote a check while the man took the container out. She handed George the check with a shy smile and ran nerviously after her husband.

The three people that were left he did not know. Two, conservatively dressed, were sitting a few seats down from where the couple had been sitting, and the lone man, clad in old bell-bottom jeans, a faded Western style shirt, and cheap canvas tennis shoes long overdue, was three rows behind them.

"O.K." he barked, not even looking at the merchandise, "Let's start her at twenty-five dollars. Do I hear twenty-five?"

"Here." said a man in the front.

"Do I have thirty, thirty, thirty, anywhere thirty?" George shouted. "Give me three tens."

"Hundred," gruffled the man in back as he leaned back and slit his eyes.

Simultaneously the men on the front turned to look at their opponent, but he ignored them and spat out the toothpick he had been chewing on.

Without consulting his partner, and without any probing from the auctioneer, one of the men on the front row shouted, "Hundred twenty-five."

Not hesitating, the lone man said between his teeth, "Two hundred."

One of the two men on the front row got up and left, as it insulted. The other sat open-mouthed, looking as though he didn't know whether to go after his friend, or the enemy behind him.

"Two-ten," he bid, provoked.

"Two-fifty," the opponent said smuggly, almost growling his request. An unlit cigarette hung from his lower lip and his arms were spread across the backs of the chairs to either side of him. He seemed to be settling in for a long siege.

Once again the front row man turned to eye the offender. This time the man acknowledged his stare by pushing the cigarette upward between his lips while cocking his trigger-finger to an imaginary gun and aiming it at his victim in the front row.

The victim walked toward the door and just as he got there the imaginary bullet hit him. The lone man threw back his head and laughed loudly so that his wicked laughter sounded off the aluminum walls. He was still laughing when the car of the other men turned sharply on the gravel of the parking lot and screeched onto the street.

The man stretched his hands lazily toward the ceiling and stood up. "Like to see my purchase," he demanded through his cigarette.

"It's right here," retorted George, who could not help but hate the man. "But you can't open it until I have your money in my bag." He motioned to the cash bag the crew had left with him so he could deposit the procedes from his sales also.

"Sure enough," snorted the man with a wide grin. He took a dirty folded envelope from his hip pocket. George could tell that it was full of bills.

"Got change for a hundred?" the man challenged, handing George three hundred dollar bills.

George put out his hand to take the money, but the man hesitated and began laughing again. Finally he turned George's hand so that the palm was up, and he dropped the bills into it one at a time.

Determined to make the man wait, George took the receipt book out of the bag first. He realized that it was too dark to see the pad, so he walked to the doorway where it was a little lighter. Suddenly another door on the other side of the building slammed shut as the wind caught it, and a cloud-burst began.

Finished with the paper work, and having gotten the man's change from the bag, George approached the man where he was cleaning one of the rifles with a tattered red bandana. Halfway between the door and the man, the lone man raised the rifle and trained it on George.

This man is a fool, George thought as a noise near the door caused him to look back. He could see nothing but he could have sworn he heard someone call; "Georgie-O!"

He turned back around to see the gun still aimed toward him.

"You think so," sneered the man.

"What?" George whispered, knowing that he had not said his thoughts aloud.

Stunned by the man's remark, he did not hear nor feel the bullet that caused him to spin around and finally hit the cement floor. He couldn't see, George realized with horror, but he could hear the man dragging the box, and he felt him jerk the money-bag from under his arm.

As if a door had opened to a dark, black, room, George could see a rectangle of light, but there was nothing beyond it. A soft voice cooed a distant, "Welcome home, darling." Immediately a sharp pain, like a needle pushed through his brain, struck his skull, and the vision disappeared. There were the raindrops crashing onto the tin roof. Then there was nothing.

Tara L. Humphries

LITTERED LIFETIME

It seems that I am always
on my knees, searching
For the thing dropped, misplaced,
and, yet, never forgotten.

Pre-college learnings stuffed in boxes;
class notes in Hebrew,
The code is missing; thrown away
without thinking twice.

Dances dried and pressed in Bibles;
savored wisps, rotten now
And waiting to be replaced
by fresher daisies.

Approximations of adults
kept in plastic savers.
Their chubby faces, though pressed, not frowning.
Where could they be now?

Promises made, but briefly kept--
broken for the sake of another.
Now only beaded trinkets
to be restrung for babies and dolls.

Then much like ticket stubs
and old letters are lives.
Strown with something less than important,
more than trash.
Should I save them or bag them up,
these memories?

Angela Brown

Sarah Farrior

RUSH

The city rushes by,
It has no time to wait
For people like me
As unsure as a falling leaf,
Not knowing which way to go next.
The hands guide the wheels and they quickly turn,
Without looking, yet knowing where their journey ends.
There is no time to gaze with wonder at the happenings around them.
Today has come, but now is gone.
Tomorrow will bring new adventure to many,
Yet some will repeat activities of today.
Will I know what is to come?
Only experience can bring knowledge.
What has not been, is hidden well in the folds of the future.

Saralyn P. Dean

A PRIVATE PARADISE

Is there a place where I can go
to truly be alone?
To sit and think my private thoughts
a place to call my own?

A place where no one else will come
to bother me with talk
A quiet place where I can sit
or sometimes take a walk?

A place where mellow sunlight
floods gently rolling hills
And creatures from a wooded site
dart back and forth at will?

Is there a place where sunlight drifts
down through moss draped trees,
And dances on a sea of green
that's singing in the breeze?

Each of us must have a place
where we can be alone.
To sit and think our private thoughts
a place to call my own.

Stephanie Phillips

Saralyn P.
Dean

Second Prize Art

Saralyn Dean

HAIKU

Mrs. Ladybug
Wrigling, tickling, showing-off
Dancing on my nose

Rainbows in the sky
Reach and bend and touch the ends
Colorful ribbons

Snowflakes smoothly drift
Across the gray, hazy sky
Magic carpet ride

Winter sun touched my face
Florida crept in my mind
Memories of summer

Sarah Friday

SPRING

She arrives incessantly enfolded within the wind.
Inaudible anthems proclaim her long-awaited return.
As Ra smiles to greet his noble comrad,
Aves serenade her with ancestral praise.
Towering gallows sway rhythmically to her seasonal song.
Virgins rise exalted by her supernal beauty.
Mortals gape at her inexplicable task,
While raptutous odes of Venus
possess their ever vulnerable souls.

Cindy Pleasants

Saralyn Dean

UNIQUE THING

The stars in the sky
Glitter against the darkness.
Stars we never saw together
And wished upon when apart.

The moon so full
Lighting the darkest night
Gazed upon separately
And forgotten as distance
Between our hearts diminished.

Of all things I have seen,
Love is the most unique.

Wanda Freeman

Saralyn Dean

FROM SHORE TO HORIZON

As the waves break gently against the shore
I realize you are gone
My mind is in a state of pain,
As my heart bleeds all alone.

As the seagulls fly their separate ways,
Likewise, so have we.
The distance between us is very far
Like the mountains from the sea.

As the sea oats wave from side to side,
I wonder where you are
Were you content with what we had
Or are you reaching for a further star.

As a ship sails far into the sunset
I remember where we were bound,
Our hopes wrapped tight with love,
Love that was lost and never found.

Carolyn Gay

DECEMBER SNOW

A surprise of snow:
First a few flakes floating
Frosting the paved street,
   the leaf-strewn earth, the bare bough;
A water prism, a wisp of mist;
A sixfold crystal, delicate, intricate--
So frail one human breath
   reduces it to a moist droplet--
Curtaining the sky, filling sooty air,
Transforming brown earth to sparkling miracles.

Snow makes wind visible:
swirling, slanting, eddying the air--
Flowing along the street,
Curling around a tree, a bush,
Fanning a tiny drift on the side
   of a dead stem of goldenrod;
Shaping its own patterns in fallen snow
   graceful as a swallow's flight in June dusk.

A cloud shivered into a storm:
For a while a weary, worried world was innocent;
But this pure perfection will not endure:
It turns to slush and dirty man-made mounds,
Snarling traffic; clogging,
Complicating human routine.
Even as we complain,
   and the frosting is covered with grime and grit,
It continues to do good--
Blanketing, protecting root, bulb, seed
   from the killing fang of winter cold--
Yet, it nourishes the earth.

Jean Frazier

NIHILISM

How much longer can we take it;
silence of discontent
No-one can break it
silence of fear

steamy smother of light
creamy soup of quiet
stillness of unwavering warmth
concentration drowned in its own haven
Creativity stiffled and hardened
like refrigerated pizza

excited by their own presence
thought-waves flutter
and beat themselves to
shreaded butterfly wings
Possibility turns to dust
which collects in the corner
and disappears under its own weight

Tara Humphries

DESPAIR

...Tugs at my plodding legs
like a sticky-fingered child
who is insistant
upon recognition.
Lollipop protruding
ominously from
the corner
of his pink-rimmed
sneer,
He offers a taste.
And though this addictive
sweetness will eventually
make me sick,
I will enjoy it for a while.
And smudge all
I touch
with its adhering
Long-lasting
Unpleasantness.

Julie Taylor

Kelly McConnell

DIES IRAE

In the still,
the calm,
the waves
don't care.
the screams,
the cries
muffled ...
by warmth.
to reach
to gain
ultimate
sacrifice.
the most
extreme
to risk
to reach
the very top.

Tara Humphries

OVERSET

I walked in the Wind to clear my mind
I walked in the Rain to cleanse my souls
I am a she-Cardinal
singing to the Death of Night

Neither did the Lightning seal my eyes
nor did the Thuder deafen my ears
My colour is not bright
my somber song is not heard.

I troll my dirge to the Grim Reaper of Midnight

I troll my velvet-cloaked blood-dirge
to the midnight ferry-man of Styx.

Tara Humphries

NATURE'S GOOD MORNING

Chattering streams sparkling like the sound
of a high note on a piano;
Mourning of the rooster for another wink of sleep;
Soft murmurings of wind in the ear of the pine trees;
Whispering clouds of dust chasing after a farm truck;
Music of the yellow-feeling sun strumming the dew-
covered grasses.

God's countryside concert awakening.

Katherine Swinson

Third Prize Art

Wanda Freeman

SPRING

We welcome your coming, warm wind of the south!
The breath of your perfume, the brush of your mouth,
Far over the distance, you stealthily creep,
Calling to nature to rouse from her sleep.

The tulips, long dormant, beneath drifted snow,
Joyfully teeming to burst forth and grow,
The red winged blackbird's cong-ko-ree-caw-
Proclaiming springtime, returned by God's law.

Tender green grass springs from hard frozen ground,
Silvery blossoms on dogwoods abound,
My young love resurging in myraid forms,
Like opulent sunshine follows acrid storms.

The ice covered river, so silent so long
Is ardently waiting to burst into song;
Come raindrops and sunshine, its harmonies swell,
With pulsating spendor, bid winter farewell.

O spirit of springtime, bring life to this death!
Life's sweet resurrection, renew with a breath;
The blue bird and robin, with swiftness of wing,
Can herald a season, but God gives us spring.

Jean Frazier

Darlene Flynt

PERFECT IMPERFECTIONS

And here you come again,
Hair mussed, a barette missing-
Mud-cake frosting smeared ear to ear.

How did your pants get so wet?
You were jumping the ditch and missed-
That's also how you scraped your knee.

But you just had a bath and changed clothes!
You stretch to me clenched fists
Your broadening smile contagious.

The left hand you gently open to reveal
A tiny cramped toad,
In your right a crinkled daisy.

For me?
I love the daisy! Thank you.
Let's let the toad go back into the ditch.

You scamper away
Back to the ditch
Back with the daisies and toads.

I can wash your clothes,
Give you another bath.
You must have your scraped knees and mud pies.

I wish you could stay this perfect in your imperfections.
I love your unfeigned smiles, your unforced generosity-
Even if you do smear jelly on my sofa.

And your single daisy...
Means more to me than a dozen dozen roses.

Cindy Morgan

Honorable Mention

Art

Karen Crowell

AWARE

The crisp air penatrates my very soul
My mind is not closed to coldness
Yet my conscious is not chilled, just aware.
Alone yet surrounded by people going their own way.
What are their thoughts?
Anger? Happiness? Loneliness?
They can not be as anxious as I am to find contentment.
No one is aware of my needs, except you.

And you are far away, yet still aware.
You feel my loneliness, happiness, and love.
We touch each other though not near.
My needs are parallel with yours.
We need each other--
Love?
Only time will tell.

Saralyn Dean

STORM

Aware of brown crumpled leaves,
the sticks and stones
that break your bones,
the names that hurt you
and the broken bottles that cut you-
I see the invisible wind carry then in a
cyclical pathway-
Safe in the eye of the hurricane-
I see your pain.

Is there a monsoon in the weather forecast?
No, but I possess malaise
Arthritis maybe? - I always hope and pray
No, in comes drowning rain-
I foresaw your pain.

The storm dies down at dawn
Spring is finally here but not for long-
April showers bring...
me anxiety for I knew they would
arrive when noboby got excited-

And the problem is it rained on you
Making me go lame
-my dear friend
I feel your pain.

Elizabeth Johnson

SUNSET

The day was long but worth
The wait for it to end.
The deep orange and amber
Blends are exquisite.
The glow of the colors give the sky
Light which glows upon the entire earth.
The colors glow inside of you also,
Making you happy, the person
Holding your hand is sharing
The moment with you.

Page Clark

Honorable Mention Art

Saralyn Dean

WAVE

Hanging over the sea, misted madness muffles a crazed sea not.
Like a savage, dauntless does she surge, wailing in senses without.
Capped in frenzied foam, now she crests
Whipped as she cracks, while ill mannered still.
Falling heavy in roar, the sand she soon strikes,
When a storm at birth, but a shower at end.

Stephanie Phillips

FOREVER FRIENDS

I dreamed him up when I was knee-high
"friends," I remarked, "til' the day we die!"
Though only seen through my tiny eyes,
he was always included as one of the guys.
We often found trouble that good friend and I,
but he always got blamed for I thought I could lie.
He shared every meal and helped clean my plate,
through Rover he'd eat the liver I hate.
From each bright new morning to each lullaby,
A friend to whom I could always rely.

Susan Amos

Honorable Mention Art

Martha King

SOUND FAMILIAR?

No one had to tell me,
I knew it all along-
The bluejay's been dancing
and singing his song.
The girls grab their towels
and slam shut their books,
it's out to Peace Beach
for sun and good looks!
The frisbees go flying,
the beach music blares,
the windows are open
(if anyone dares).
How many jonquils
have grown on the lawn?
Isn't it nice that those
bare trees are gone?
Now they're all dressed
in their Easter outfits,
(I get to wear last year's.
Ain't it the pits?)
Our menus consist
of salads and water-
"We'll all get thinner
as the days get hotter!"
I got a phone call;
he said the three words!
And I started to sing
in tune with those birds.
It's Spring; I'm in love,
the feeling is strong.
No one had to tell me,
I knew it all along.

Sarah Friday

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